

WILL SOME "FATHERLY" POLICEMAN EXPLAIN WHY OFFICERS THREATEN TO ARREST BOYS

By Jane Whitaker.

The "chanceless boy" isn't a myth by any means; every day in courts you will see him, but the saddest thing to me is to hear the mother of a boy plead that he has had no chance. And yesterday a mother so pleaded in the Boy's Court, telling the judge that the boy's father had abused him and wouldn't let him stay in the house; that the boy, forced on the street, had been arrested for loitering and sent to the Bridewell for thirty days; that when he came out he was again forced on the streets and mingled with bad company until now he was accused of the crime of stealing brass and peddling it.

The boy himself, sandy-haired and blue-eyed, added his own plea, as his eyes were alternately wistful and pleading, hopeless and beaten.

"If I get another chance, I won't get in trouble again," he said. "But everything that's done is blamed on me anyway since I came out of the Bridewell. I did steal the bag of brass, but I won't ever do anything wrong again if I get a chance."

"Poor little youngster, he certainly never did have a chance," I said to Miss Thompson, who is the Big Sister of the court and who always wins my heart because she is so sympathetic and so understanding.

"There was a sadder story than that here this morning," she said. "A boy of 17 accused of holding up a store, and he had been taken into the job by his brother-in-law, a Pontiac graduate."

"The boy seems to have been innocent of the planning of the robbery. He seemed to think it was all a joke until it actually occurred and he was shot in the leg."

"But the really sad part of it is that the brother-in-law is married to the boy's sister, who is not only totally deaf but also blind, yet the mother of two children, and the brother-in-law idolizes his blind and

deaf wife. He has run away, but the boy was captured. If you will come with me I will let you talk to the boy."

I followed her back into a room where the boys are kept while they are waiting to be brought into court or afterward when they are waiting to be released or sent away, and the boy was not there, but my eyes opened wide when I did see a boy of whom I am very fond, because "he never grew up."

"What in the world are you doing here, child?" I asked him, but he hung his head sheepishly and did not answer.

I hurried back into the courtroom, hoping that the "boy who never grew up" had not been arrested on a serious charge, because he always seems to me like a wee laddie of 10 or 11 instead of 17—he is so full of mischief.

And why do you suppose he had been arrested? For slapping a very serious-faced Italian.

"This boy was raised as a child in that neighborhood," the officer said, "and since his people moved away he comes back to visit. This man says he was coming along and as he passed a crowd of six or eight boys this boy reached out and slapped him."

Into the eyes of the "boy who never grew up" a gleam of mischief stole and then faded away. "I just did it for fun," he told the judge, and he was released on a peace bond.

I followed him out into the corridor, not to scold him, but because the "boy who never grew up" is very interesting to me and I wanted to hear some of his nonsense.

But the officer was talking to him severely and as I passed he called: "Hey there, come here. I want you to tell this boy what will happen to him if I ever catch him in that neighborhood again. I'll run him in, and with this record against him it will go hard."

Something mutinous poised on the